Old Colony Building
407 South Dearborn Street;
southeast corner of South Dearborn
and West Van Buren Streets, bounded
on east by Plymouth Court
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. Ill-1053

HABS
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16-CHIG,
55-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1053

HABS ILL, 16-CHIG, 55-

OLD COLONY BUILDING

Location: 407 South Dearborn Street; southeast corner of South Dearborn and West Van Buren Streets, bounded on east by Plymouth Court, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Phyllis Tuckerman, et al.; managed by Hall and Ellis Real Estate, 407 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Present Use: Office building.

Statement of Significance: The building is an example of the work of the Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche. Since the high, narrow, slab-like structure is almost entirely freestanding and without masonry bearing walls, an elaborate system of windbracing was employed. This was regarded as a remarkable structural achievement for the time.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 1, 6, 7 of Block 138 of T. G. Wright's Subdivision of Block 138, School Section addition to Chicago of Section 16-39-14.

The following is based on the chain of title recorded in Book 468A, pp. 175-177, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: The land on which the Old Colony stands was originally in the John L. Hayes family (Document 70902, November 29, 1872). On May 8, 1884, Edward R. Cogswell granted a party-wall agreement to Samuel Shoenemann for a wall on the south line of lot 7 (Document 544140). Francis Bartlett, of Boston (see Supplementary Material) took over the property from William Hayes, et al. on March 20, 1885 (Documents 611135-611139). On February 8, 1893, Benjamin Shoenemann granted J. F. Slater a receipt for 1/2 of the party-wall on lot 7 (Document 1812855). On August 1, 1908, the deed was transferred from William A. Slater to Elizabeth Sears et al. (Document 4277504). On November 7, 1958 Phillis Sears et al. transferred the deed to Franklin Dexter then to Elizabeth S. Warren and Phyllis S. Tuckerman (Documents 17371024, 17371026, 17371027). As of the last recorded entry in the book, Tuckerman is still the owner. /Note: A check with the present leasing agents, Hall and Ellis, has revealed that the building is still owned by trustees in Boston; they would not supply their names/.

2. Date of erection: 1894.

3. Architects: Holabird and Roche.

Vitae:

William Holabird:

Born: September 11, 1854
American Union, Duchess County, New York

Education: Graduated St. Paul, Minnesota High School - 1871
Attended United States Military Academy, West Point, New York - 1873-75

Practice: Office of W. L. Jenney, Chicago, 1872-1880
Partnership with O. C. Simmonds, 1880-1881 (Holabird & Simmonds)
Partnership with O. C. Simmonds & Martin Roche, 1881-1883 (Holabird, Simmonds & Roche)
Partnership with Martin Roche, 1883-1896 (Holabird & Roche)
Partnership with Martin Roche & E. A. Renwick, 1896-1923 (Holabird & Roche)

Died: July 19, 1923
Evanston, Illinois

Additional Biography:
American Architect, Vol. 124 (August 1, 1923) (obituary)
Architecture & Building, Vol. 55 (September, 1923) (obituary)
Dictionary of American Biography, New York: 1936
Herringshaw's City Blue Book Biography, Chicago: 1915 & 1923
Western Architect, Vol. 32 (August, 1923) (obituary)

Martin Roche:

Born: August 15, 1855
Cleveland, Ohio (moved to Chicago, Illinois - 1857)

Education: Amount of formal education is undetermined

Practice: Office of W. L. Jenney, 1872-1881
Partnership with Wm. Holabird & O. C. Simmonds, 1881-1883 (Holabird, Simmonds & Roche)
Partnership with Wm. Holabird 1883-1896 (Holabird & Roche)
Partnership with Wm. Holabird & E. A. Renwick, 1896-1923 (Holabird & Roche)

Partnership with John Holabird, 1923-1927
(Holabird & Roche)

Died: June 4, 1927
Evanston, Illinois

Additional Biography:
Architecture, Vol. 56 (August, 1927)
(obituary)
Western Architect, Vol. 36 (July, 1927)
(obituary)

/J. William Rudd, "A Report of an Investigation into the Architectural Work of Holabird & Roche, Architects. Chicago 1883-1927." (Evanston, Illinois: Unpublished paper. Department of Art, Northwestern University, May, 1963), pp. 1, 2./

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Francis Bartlett of Boston --- general construction. Corydon T. Purdy of the firm of Purdy and Henderson -- engineers /Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 138/.

William Sooy-Smith -- consulting engineer /Ibid./, /Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 123/.

Columns and girders by Phoenix Mills /Joseph and Caroline Kirkland, The Story of Chicago (Chicago: Dibble Publishing Company, 1894), p. 348/.

5. Original plans, construction, etc.: There is no record of the original Building Permit.

Frontages: 148' on Dearborn Street & Plymouth Court; 68' on Van Buren Street; 17 stories, 210' high; 6 passenger elevators; tower bays at the corners; first 4 stories of light blue Bedford stone, upper part of pressed brick and white terra cotta; originally 5 stores and 600 offices; corridor floors in mosaic tile; cost over $900,000. /Randall, op. cit., p. 178/.

One basement on spread foundations with beam grillages; no self-supporting walls; 4 caissons built by General Sooy-Smith support south wall in order to stop its settlement; average settlement after 9 months was 4 3/16 inches; portal windbracing; original cost including architect's fee was 42.16 cents per cubic foot /Ibid., p. 138/. The land on which the Old Colony stands was purchased in 1884 for

$116,000 /Kirkland, op. cit., p. 347/.

In an interview with Mr. Richard Cabeen of the present firm of Holabird & Root, held May 7, 1963, it was stated that the firm proudly pointed out that by the use of the rounded corner bays, occupancy in excess of 100% of the original site was obtained /Rudd, op. cit., p. 9/.

For a more detailed description of the structural system, see Condit, op. cit., pp. 122-124, and Randall, op. cit., p. 138.

For two early descriptions (1893, 1894) see Supplementary Material.

6. Notes on alterations and additions: The building has received necessary mechanical improvements. In 1947, preceding the extension of the Dearborn Street subway, south of Van Buren Street, hardpan caissons were built under the Dearborn Street columns /Ibid./.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

See Kirkland in Supplementary Material.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

Birkmire, W.H. Skeleton Construction in Buildings. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1897. Pp. 183-205.

Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. Pp. 122-124, 140, Figs. 76-79.
A good analysis of the structural system employed in the Old Colony.

Kirkland, Joseph and Caroline. The Story of Chicago. Chicago: Dibble Publishing Company, 1894. Pp. 347-350, Photograph p. 346.

"Old Colony Building, Chicago," Ornamental Iron 2:32-36 (September, 1894).
Plan.

Old Colony Building, Chicago, 1893. Microfilm roll 18, frames 89-280. Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

"Old Colony Building," Harpers Weekly Special Chicago number. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1902. P. 14.
Photograph.

"Old Colony Building, Holabird & Roche, Architects," Architectural Record 31:389 (April, 1912).

"Old Colony Building, Van Buren and Dearborn Streets, Chicago; Bryan Lathrop, Agent, 115 Monroe Street," c. 1893.
Rental brochure containing floor plans and a perspective rendering, prepared by rental agent; now in the possession of Hall and Ellis Real Estate.

Prominent Buildings Erected by George A. Fuller Co., 189_: 30-31 /Also in 1904:58-59; 1910:23/.

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. Pp. 93, 134, 138, 156, 159, 178, 300. Bibliography p. 138.

Roche, Martin. "Recent and Current Work of Holabird and Roche, Chicago," New York Architect, Vol. 3, No. 10 (October, 1909). Pp. 3-10.

Rudd, J. William. "A Report of an Investigation into the Architectural Work of Holabird & Roche, Architects. Chicago (1883-1927)." Evanston, Illinois: Unpublished paper. Department of Art, Northwestern University, May, 1963.

2. Supplementary Material:

Kirkland, Joseph and Caroline. The Story of Chicago. Chicago: Dibble Publishing Company, 1894. Pp. 347-350:

. . . The great structures soaring skyward on either side of the way fitly typify the boundless ambition and enterprise of the citizens of Chicago, especially of those men whose clear insight into the future made them a few years ago, see the possibilities and destiny of Dearborn street. Among the remarkable buildings upon this splendid thoroughfare a structure which has been very generally admired for its beauty is the Old Colony.

Stately, perfectly proportioned, pure in outline and exquisite in tint, it rises at the southeast corner of Dearborn and Van Buren streets with Plymouth place on the east. Built to admit all the light of the heavens, it is yet braced so firmly against all the winds of this "windy city," that in a storm on February 12, 1894, in which the wind velocity was the most rapid ever recorded at the Chicago Signal Service Station, when the tempest was blowing at the rate of from 70 to 80 miles an hour, the maximum variation in an upper story as tested by spirit level, transit and plumb

line was only three sixteenths of an inch.

The ground on which the Old Colony building stands was bought only ten years ago by Bryan Lathrop for the Bartlett estate, $116,000 being paid for it. The result today puts to route the wiseacres who at that time termed it "a reckless investment." For many years Mr. Lathrop has been the enthusiastic prophet of its future. Immediately following the acquisition of this property he erected upon it a one-story structure, which was probably the first building of so temporary a nature in the city, in which slow burning construction was used. This place, with an usually extensive glass frontage, rented very well, and fullfilled its mission until the hour was ripe for the present splendid pile. The design of the Old Colony building was the work of that very scientific and thoroughly artistic firm, Messrs. Holabird & Roche. To impart beauty and proportion to the modern "skyscraper" is no easy task for the architect. So many practical questions have to be taken into consideration that this is generally left to look after itself. But no such accusation can be made against this stately, symmetrical, serenly imposing edifice; with its strong, gracefully rounded corners, its massive base, simple centre and pillard cornice, it is a delight to the eye and an ornament to the city.

The history and description of what is known as the "Chicago construction" is related in the first volume of this work. It suffices here to say that this form with its latest inventions, additions and improvements is employed in the Old Colony building. The massive steel skeleton that supports the walls rests on a foundation of apparently imperishable solidity. The columns and girders of the building, made at the Phoenix Mills are hot-riveted and after the latest scientific design by the well-known engineering expert, Mr. Purdy of the firm of Purdy & Henderson. This firm also introduced an entirely new system of bracing for this building, which consists of four tiers of steel arches reaching from the basement to the roof. Each arch, extending from the floor to the ceiling, is firmly joined at the bottom with the portal or arch beneath it and at the ends to the Phoenix columns by solid, hot-riveted connections. Over 15,000 rivets were driven in the erection of the seventy great steel arches that strengthen this vast structure and make it impregnable in our fiercest gales.

The Old Colony is most thoroughly built to resist Chicago's other and still greater enemy, fire. In most steel buildings the distance from the face of the wall, or building line, to the centre of the steel columns is from twelve to fifteen inches; in this structure, however, it measures twenty-four inches. To quote from one account:

"The fire-proofing of the interior columns of this building is equal to the best work in this city, while the fire-proofing of the exterior columns is superior to anything heretofore constructed. Not only are these latter fire-proofed like the central ones, but outside the fire-proofing is built a foot of solid brick masonry. It is believed this work has been so thorough that a fire could not possibly do injury to any part of the steel construction." Prof. Alexander Krupsky, of the Technological Institute of St. Petersburg, Russia, was last year instructed by his government thoroughly to examine into and report as to the manner of constructing and fire-proofing steel buildings in America. After an extensive examination he decided that the Old Colony building in Chicago, was the most completely fire-proofed and best constructed piece of steel work he could find in this country. He made a very careful examination of the building, and before leaving for home he secured copies of all the principal drawings to accompany his report.

So much for internal construction, the great steel skeleton. The exterior of the Old Colony Building is divided as before stated into three divisions required in artistic architecture, the base, centre and cornice. The first three stories are of blue Bedford chiseled stone giving an air of massive strength. The remaining fourteen stories are built of what is called a Roman shaped brick, of a pure cream color and finished smooth as a tile. The grime and soot of the city cannot sink into nor discolor these walls, which will, by being regularly washed, retain their pure brilliancy. To harmonize with this unusual brick work the exterior trimmings are of white terra cotta, thus completing the exquisitely fresh effect and carrying out the idea of old colonial coloring.

One thing strikes both the layman and the student of this kind of architecture and that is the exceptional amount of lighting surface in this building. Bounded on three sides by regular thoroughfares it presents a lighting area 370 feet in length, so that one is somewhat prepared to learn that there are 75,000 square feet of glass used in the building.

There are three entrances, one on Dearborn street, one on Plymouth place, but the main entrance is on Van Buren street, and is very imposing, with an archway two stories in height and proportionately wide. This and the vestibule are paved with ceramic mosaic, and the walls and ceilings are finished in scagliola. The ceiling is divided into thirty-seven panels by richly moulded beams and connects with the walls by a most artistic cornice. At the three entrances are perfect fac-similes carved in stone of the seal of the Plymouth colony, known as the "Old Colony," whence the building

and adjoining street take their names.

The interior finish equals the exterior in perfection and artistic taste. Italian marble, mosaic and tile, give richness and elegance to floor and wall, while all the wood work is of quarter-sawed oak. Handwrought iron, that material which the old Florentine architects and artists delighted in, here adorns entrances, stairways, and elevator cars and inclosures. The steam-heating, plumbing and sanitary work, and in short, all the practical and mechanical parts of the building are up to the latest designs and inventions in these lines; Americans excelling all others in such matters.

Even the most stoical of us is affected in a greater or less degree by his surroundings and the man whose daily business life is passed in such a stately, beautiful and perfect building as the Old Colony cannot but be strengthened and stimulated by the atmosphere of tranquil completeness where light, air, cleanliness and convenience reign supreme. The American financier is surrounded by far more service and luxury than ever waited on the most sybaritical monarch.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is an example of the work of the Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche. The high narrow, slab-like form is without masonry bearing walls. Thus an elaborate system of windbracing was employed, a remarkable structural achievement for the time.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 151'-4" x 74'-0".

2. Number of stories: Seventeen.

3. Number of bays: east and west walls have five bays each; north wall has one bay; south is party wall.

4. Layout-shape: Rectangular.

5. Wall construction: Three stories of blue Bedford stone; remaining fourteen of cream-colored, Roman brick, with smooth tile finish. Belt courses at sills of fourth, fifteenth and seventeenth floors.

6. Foundations: Spread foundations with beam grillages. Some caissons have been added.

7. Structural system, framing: Steel skeleton with Phoenix columns, steel beams and girders. Arched wind-bracing between columns.

8. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: Original main entrance on Van Buren Street is now closed. Secondary entrance on Dearborn Street has been remodeled and is now the main entrance. Service entrance on Plymouth Court is original.

   b. Windows: First floor windows are display windows. Second floor windows and center window unit on north wall are "Chicago windows" (large fixed center window flanked by two one-over-one-light, double-hung ventilating sash). All other windows are one-over-one-light, double-hung sash units. Oriel windows have curved glass and frames.

9. Roof:

   a. Shape, covering: Flat, built-up.

   b. Cornice, eaves: elaborate white terra-cotta cornice at roof on west, north and east sides.

   c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Partial oriels (arc projections from wall) at south-west and south-east corners. Full oriels at north-east and north-west corners of building.

C. Descriptions of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

   a. Basement: Mechanical and storage space.

   b. First floor: Entrance lobby and stores.

   c. Second through Seventeenth Floor: Offices.

2. Stairways: One stair located in center of building is flanked by three elevators on either side.

3. Flooring: Marble in circulation areas. Linoleum and carpeting in most offices. (Corridors originally mosaic tile).

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster and paint with a marble wainscot in hallways and remodeled wooden paneling in first floor lobby.

5. Doorways and doors: Oak doors with glass light in upper panel of door. Continuous head strip in corridors. Open elevator shafts are screened with a grid of wrought-iron mesh.

6. Decorative features and trim: Sinuous vine and leaf pattern in railings of stairwell. Continuous wooden band at ceiling in corridors.

7. Notable hardware: Original hardware on many doors. Brass escutcheons and door knobs. Escutchons have parallel sides and semi-circular top and bottom. Knobs have "O-C-B" Monogram.

8. Lighting; type of fixture: Electrical; fixtures in corridors are small white globes at ceiling.

9. Heating: Central.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The building is located at the southeast corner of Dearborn and Van Buren Streets with Plymouth Court on the east side of the building. The site is on the south edge of Chicago's "Loop."

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July, 1964

HABS
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Addendum to:
OLD COLONY BUILDING
407 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1053

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Data pages 1 through 10 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 11.

INVENTORY OF PHOTOGRAMMETRIC IMAGES

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One survey control contact print per plate; survey control information for each pair.

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-301L *	WEST ELEVATION--INCLINED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-301R	WEST ELEVATION--INCLINED
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-302L *	WEST ELEVATION--LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-302R	WEST ELEVATION--LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 90%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-303L *	WEST ELEVATION FROM SW--LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-303R	WEST ELEVATION FROM SW--LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-304L *	WEST ELEVATION FROM SW--INCLINED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-304R	WEST ELEVATION FROM SW--INCLINED
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-305L *	WEST ELEVATION FROM NORTH BAYS--LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-305R	WEST ELEVATION FROM NORTH BAYS--LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-306L *	WEST ELEVATION AT SIDEWALK ACROSS STREET
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4210-306R	WEST ELEVATION AT SIDEWALK ACROSS STREET
	Left and right overlap: 80%

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

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